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Letter dated 8 April 2008 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward to you a copy of the concept paper for the Security Council debate on the "Relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union, in the maintenance of international peace and security", to be held on 16 April 2008 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

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Annex to the letter dated 8 April 2008 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept paper on strengthening the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union, in the maintenance of international peace and security

1. Introduction

1.1 On 16 April 2008, South Africa will once again take the opportunity of its presidency of the Security Council to continue exploring concrete measures for strengthening the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union (AU), in the maintenance of international peace and security. In this regard, the South African delegation will convene a thematic debate at the level of heads of State and Government with the aim of adopting concrete measures on strengthening the relationship between the two organizations in meeting the challenges of peace and security. This will also be an opportunity for Member States of the United Nations to share their experiences on their interaction with the organization.

2. Background/underlying motivation

2.1 It would be recalled that the maintenance of international peace and security is the primary responsibility of the United Nations Security Council. It would also be recalled that Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations provides for the role of regional arrangements in the maintenance of international peace and security. In addition, the mandate of the AU Peace and Security Council is about the maintenance of peace and security in Africa, as provided for in the relevant provisions of the Protocol relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of AU.

2.2 Furthermore, the meeting of the Security Council at the level of heads of State and Government on 25 September 2007 under the theme "Peace and security in Africa" stressed the importance of strengthening the relationship between the United Nations and Africa. Highlighted was also the need for the international community to build Africa's capacity in conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict situations.

2.3 The current peace and security challenges addressed by AU have raised new questions regarding the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular AU. Central among them is arriving at an understanding on how to strengthen the relationship between the Security Council, as an organ bestowed with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and regional organizations, particularly the AU Peace and Security Council.

2.4 AU initiated its own missions in Burundi, Darfur and, recently, Somalia. In some cases subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States also played a leading role in the resolution of conflicts. In many cases AU intervened at a time when it was not possible for the United Nations to deploy a

peacekeeping mission. It has also been experienced that United Nations interventions have sometimes taken a longer time to operationalize, even after they have been authorized by the United Nations Security Council.

2.5 In this regard, in order to enable the Peace and Security Council to perform its responsibilities with respect to the deployment of peace support missions and interventions, AU envisages establishing an African standby force to provide rapid response to erupting conflict situations in Africa.

2.6 Beyond the deployment of peacekeeping forces AU has also led several peacemaking and mediation efforts in the continent, such as those in Côte d'Ivoire, the Comoros, Uganda and, recently, Kenya. All these efforts, in which AU utilizes its good offices, were aimed directly at the maintenance of international peace and security. In this regard, AU has recently established its Panel of the Wise in order to support the efforts of the AU Peace and Security Council and those of the Chairperson of the Commission in the area of conflict prevention.

2.7 Furthermore, full implementation of the decisions by the African Union has been hampered by lack of resources, as has been evident most recently in the cases of Darfur and Somalia. When the African Union deploys its troops into a conflict area, it does so on behalf of the United Nations with the objective of maintaining international peace and security. The central challenge for the Security Council is how to meet its responsibility and obligation in such cases.

2.8 The March 2007 United Nations Security Council presidential statement clearly recognized the point that the ad hoc arrangement that exists currently between the Security Council and regional organizations, in particular the African Union, is unsustainable. The meeting also recognized that there is an urgent need for a clear definition of roles between the United Nations Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council.

3. The open debate

This open debate will offer an opportunity to address, at the highest political level:

3.1 The complex nature of some current conflicts and the need to respond timeously to threats to peace, taking into account factors such as the capacity and, at times, the limitations of regional organizations.

3.2 Resolution of conflicts that require a strengthened international peace and security architecture, underpinned by an enhanced relationship between the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, and regional organizations.

3.3 Continual review on how best to maximize the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union.

3.4 Exchange views on ways to secure predictable, sustainable and flexible resources for regional organizations, in particular the African Union, to carry out the mandates of maintaining international peace and security.

3.5 Elaboration of cooperation in the fields of conflict prevention, resolution and management, including in respect of such issues as the good offices of the Secretary-General, mediation support, effective use of sanctions, early warning and support for the AU Panel of the Wise.

3.6 Measures to deepen for AU peacekeeping operations, including support for the development of the African standby force, exchanging views on AU early planning and start-up phase, peacekeeping management and planning, logistical and financial management, and enhancing the state of readiness of African troop-contributing countries, among others.

3.7 Measures to strengthen cooperation on peacebuilding and post-conflict stabilization, recovery and reconstruction, including consideration of issues on the Peacebuilding Commission agenda; AU participation in the Peace and Security Council processes; support for the setting up of the AU multisectoral committee and its secretariat; and sharing information and best practices.

3.8 Ways of further strengthening cooperation, coordination and consultations between the United Nations Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council on issues affecting peace and security in Africa. Commit to joint meetings between the two organs, at least once a year, either in Addis Ababa or New York, to exchange views on cooperation issues and general conflict situations in Africa.

3.9 Concrete measures to forge closer cooperation between the United Nations Secretariat and AU Commission, in all aspects of conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and development. In this regard, commit to deeper and closer relations between the United Nations and AU, in line with the 10-year plan for capacity-building with the African Union. Assistance to AU in developing the structure and capacity of its Peace Support Division, both structurally and for specific operations, e.g., through the recently formed AU assistance section in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Further joint United Nations-AU work on specific peacekeeping operations, from liaison to sharing of best practice and doctrine, training joint assessment missions, etc.

3.10 Mandates/best practice: if the pattern of the United Nations taking over AU missions and/or providing support/funding for them is to develop, there is scope for more dialogue/cooperation on strengthening mandates and aligning them better with resources. The United Nations Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council could invite their respective Secretariats before the next United Nations Security Council/Peace and Security Council meeting to agree the basis for a joint declaration of principles on best practice in peacekeeping mandates.

4. Expected outcomes

4.1 Following an open debate a resolution will be adopted on 16 April 2008.